

## **JCF Morson, Headmaster of Cowbridge Grammar School, 1870 – 1875**

James Henry Morson was in the army and in 1843 his first son, James Collin Francis Morson, was born in London. JCF Morson went to Jesus College, Oxford, where after matriculating in 1861, was a Scholar there until 1866, having obtained his BA in 1865. He entered into Holy Orders in 1870, by which time he had come to Cowbridge Grammar School as Second Master (a).

He was appointed Headmaster of the Grammar School in 1870.

He was immediately faced with problems caused by lack of finance and as a result the bad state of the buildings - a problem that it seems that Cowbridge School encountered in very early times and from which it still suffers today. Not only was the school in a bad state, so was Morson's accommodation. He wrote to Mr Jones, the bursar of Jesus College, [owners of the school at the time] to say that the pipework in the house was so bad that it must be repaired before the winter. Happily, the Bursar agreed and Morson was able to thank him.

There were two cottages opposite the school which had been purchased by Jesus College in 1868. Morson had to write to the Bursar again. He said that they were in such a bad state, they needed to be repaired to make them habitable and he enclosed two estimates for the work, one of £8 and another of £10. Later he wrote to Jones offering to pay the rent if he could have some help with the repairs. He won this battle as later he wrote sending the repair bills to Jones.

About this time Morson applied for the living of the parish of Cowbridge (b) but not surprisingly, Revd Thomas Edmondson, rector of Llanblethian with Cowbridge, seems to have frustrated Morson's attempt. Morson's involvement in the church had been part of the customary procedure, in that Jesus College always appointed priests to the position of headmaster, and the headmaster would always occupy the role of number two to the rector.

He was negotiating to buy Leys Cottage in Llanblethian when he died. The purchase was later completed by his trustees (and the property sold again in 1890).

On 26th April 1875, James Morson died at the age of thirty-two (c). His short time as head, despite all the difficulties, has been described as the best period that the school enjoyed. During his time 26 boys gained entrance to Oxford University (d).

In Holy Cross Church, Cowbridge, the window on the Chancel wall has a brass tablet inscribed 'In memory of Revd. James Colin Francis Morson MA. Headmaster Cowbridge School, who fell asleep in Jesus, April 26th 1875. This window was erected by past and present boys'.

He left two children, both born in Cowbridge: James Colin Francis aged two and Adelaide Nina aged one. His third child, John Henry Colin, was christened in Cowbridge on 3rd August 1875 (e), and so presumably was born after the death of his father. Revd Morson's widow, Matilda, moved out of the School house and set up home in 81 High Street, Cowbridge. She was twenty nine years old and came from Worcestershire (f). She was still living at 81 High Street in 1905 when the family sold the house to Sarah David (g).

Both sons followed their father's professions. James Morson became a teacher and in 1905 was a tutor at Christs Hospital School, West Horsham, Sussex. He was one of the subscribers to L. Hopkin-James's book *Old Cowbridge*.

John Morson gained his BA at Oxford in 1898 and his MA in 1902. Like his father he became a priest and from 1898 to 1900 he was a Curate in the parish of Llanblethian with Cowbridge and Welsh St Donats (h).

Adelaide Morson became a nurse and in 1905 was working at the famous St George's Hospital at Hyde Park Corner in London (g). This was recently converted into what is claimed to be one of London's most luxurious hotels.

**Sources:** (a) *Alumni Oxoniensis, 1715 -1886*  
(b) *Archives, Jesus College, Oxford*  
(c) *Gravestone Cowbridge Churchyard*  
(d) *'A Certain Schoole', Iolo Davies, Cowbridge, 1967*  
(e) *GFHS CMB Cowbridge*  
(f) *1881 Cowbridge Census*  
(g) *Conveyance dated 21.3.1905* (h) *Crockfords 1917/8, CCL*